



AVIAN INFLUENZA: DONOR COORDINATING MEETING IN JAKARTA

Summary:

- At a government donor meeting on 1 April in Jakarta, Indonesia's Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) provided information about recent avian influenza outbreaks (AI) in Indonesia, the characteristics of the h5n1 strain in Indonesia, and an honest assessment of the problems MOA is having in controlling the disease.
- A ministry of health (MOH) official said that samples from over 1,000 poultry workers had been tested, including from 43 individuals who were symptomatic, and all results were negative.
- The WHO rep at the meeting confirmed that no human cases had yet been reported in Indonesia, but noted that the potential for transmission to humans remains.
- The WHO official added that surveillance among the human population needs improvement and that Indonesia would be hard pressed to deal with an outbreak among the human population.

On 1 April, the Country Director for FAO, Indonesia called a government donor consultation meeting to discuss the recent outbreaks of AI in Indonesia. Representatives from the Dutch, Chinese, and Australian Embassies, WHO, and from GOI's MOA and MOH attended the meeting. The last such AI donor group meeting was held in Sept 2004.

Indonesia's "Second Wave" of AI

An MOA official reviewed Indonesia's incidence of AI since 2003, stating that cases first occurred in summer 2003, and that following further evidence an official declaration was made in Jan 2004. Noting that reported cases spiked in the first quarter of 2004, then diminished through the rest of 2004, the MOA official referred to the recently reported outbreaks as Indonesia's "second wave" of AI.

The MOA described the recent cases that had been reported in S. Sulawesi, W. Java (see reftel), and around Kupang in West Timor. Heretofore, no AI had been officially reported in S. Sulawesi nor W. Timor. MOA also said that the recent outbreaks in W. Java were different from previous cases as they involved a significant number of quail flocks.

In explaining how the disease spread to S. Sulawesi, the MOA official noted the eastern provinces of Indonesia were almost wholly dependent on day-old-chick (DOC) supplies from breeding farms in Java, and that AI had been found on every breeding farm on Java at some point over the past 18 months. While shipments of DOC from Java to other islands are supposed to be accompanied by animal health certificates issued by MOA, inter-island movement of DOC is almost impossible to control, and shipments are likely being made that do not possess the necessary animal health inspection and certification documents.

MOA Facing Challenges Controlling AI

In addition to the inability to control animal movements, the MOA official presented a list of challenges the MOA is facing: 1) lack of adequate compensation for mandatory depopulation; 2) farmers selling infected birds in live bird markets rather than controlled culling; 3) slow confirmatory diagnosis and delayed declaration; 4) lack of emergency preparedness; 5) weak biosecurity measures; 6) high prevalence of backyard/free range flocks; and 7) producers' lack of confidence in MOA's ability to handle the problem.

In defending MOA's policy of mass vaccination rather than "stamping out," the official said every chicken on Java would have to be killed if they were to implement a "stamping out" policy, because some degree of AI incidence has occurred in every region of Java. Java accounts for 60 percent of Indonesia poultry production, and it would not be economically viable to do mass culling, nor did the GOI have the resources to do so. In something of a vindication of the mass vaccination policy, the MOA official mentioned that Vietnam had requested guidance on the viability of mass vaccination rather than "stamping out."

The MOA official also mentioned that this "second wave" of outbreaks also differed somewhat from those that occurred last year. First of all, this time significant numbers of quail flocks have been infected,

particularly in West Java. In addition, symptoms do not seem to be as acute in chickens compared to the outbreaks last year. There was no explanation for these differences in the current outbreaks, but the official said that MOA was investigating.

A number of genetic sequence charts were presented to demonstrate that: 1) the virus found in 2005 is the same as that in 2004 and 2003, so no mutation has occurred; and 2) while similar, the virus strain is different from that found in Thailand and Vietnam.

Requests for Assistance

MOA requested assistance to obtain lab equipment, and training on disaster preparedness, surveillance, and epidemiology. It was also suggested that donors consider providing resources/personnel to conduct more in-depth studies on the virus, the efficacy of vaccination, and how the virus affects different avian species. The MOH representative reported that over 1,000 poultry workers had been tested for the virus, including 43 symptomatic individuals, and all results were negative.

A WHO representative confirmed that no human cases had been reported in Indonesia. Nonetheless, the representative cautioned that scientists cannot exclude the possibility that the h5n1 strain found in Indonesia could infect humans, and noted that the surveillance in Indonesia needed to be strengthened.

The Foreign Agriculture Service contributed this report.

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